



Idaho's Citizen Commission for Reapportionment

Capitol Building
700 W. Jefferson Street
Boise, ID 83720-0054

Phone: (208) 334-4740
E-mail: redistricting@redistricting.idaho.gov
Web site: www.redistricting.idaho.gov

Twin Falls Public Meeting
June 29, 2011
College of Southern Idaho
Aspen Building #108
7:00 pm

Chairman Andersen called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for coming. He then asked the commissioners to introduce themselves as follows: **Commissioner Lou Esposito** from Boise, **Commissioner Lorna Finman** from northern Idaho, **Commissioner Evan Frasure** from Bannock County, **Commissioner Allen Andersen** from Pocatello, **Commissioner Julie Kane** from Lapwai, and **Commissioner George Moses** from Boise. Present from the staff were **Kristin Ford** and **Cyd Gaudet**. **Brian Kane** from the Attorney General's Office was also present.

Chairman Andersen then asked **Commissioner Kane** to review the laws and regulations that the commission must follow. **Commissioner Kane** discussed that redistricting happens every 10 years after the U.S. census. She explained that the purpose is to make sure that the one person = one vote concept is followed, and that the commission can draw from 30 to 35 districts. **Commissioner Kane** advised the audience that these districts must be equal, within a deviation up to 10%. She explained that the commission must avoid dividing counties whenever possible, that they shall preserve traditional neighborhoods and communities of interest, they should avoid drawing oddly shaped districts, and if they divide counties they must be adjacent to each other and must have a highway connecting them. They must also protect precinct boundaries as much as possible and shall not protect incumbents or their respective political parties.

Chairman Andersen explained the 90 day period in which the commission has to accomplish this, and explained that they have set their own goal of July 27th to have a final plan ready to submit to the Idaho Secretary of State.

First called to testify was **Jerry Marcantonio**, from Twin Falls City, who suggested that there are a number of factors that bind together the Magic Valley, and suggested that the formation of districts should give great weight to these factors. He pointed out that Twin Falls City is the most urban area, and as it has the largest population it should have its own legislative district. He suggested that outer Twin Falls County and Jerome County are more rural and have similar issues, like water and irrigation rights, transportation, commerce and higher education. He also indicated that Minidoka and Cassia Counties are both agricultural but have different water issues than Twin Falls and Jerome County. He stated that Gooding, Lincoln and Camas County are also agricultural based and have tourism and recreation in common. **Mr. Marcantonio** also explained that Blaine County's major factors are tourism and the forest. He advised the commission that if they couldn't keep the city of Twin Falls together, it would appear to be politically motivated. Its population is forty-odd thousand, close to the population target. In answer to a question regarding the gorge creating a natural separation, **Mr. Marcantonio** explained that there was a bridge across the gorge.

At this time **Chairman Andersen** advised the audience that he would like to thank Idaho Public TV for taping this hearing and streaming it live.

Next called to testify was **Representative Stephen Hartgen** who had some points which he wanted the commission to consider. His district extends from Twin Falls to Owyhee County, both of which have increased in population. District 23 is 2% over the target deviation, and District 24 is 3% under. By simply wiggling the line, precinct by precinct, between them, reaching the target population goal is easy. District 27 "wants our numbers" because their population is too low. Why should Twin Falls County, which has grown 20%, lose one of its legislative seats to a county that has not grown? He used Maptitude to draw six districts, as suggested, but beyond that he did not feel he knew enough about the other districts to draw their lines. Growth and declines in population has been uneven across the state. He described how he and the other two legislators from his district worked to represent far-off Owyhee County, and felt they had been successful. While the district is large, 200 miles wide, today's electronic technology has made this less of an issue. It is a rural district all the way through. As to the road requirement, it is not mandatory as the commission can vote to override it, and there is at least a gravel road connecting the district, even if not a state highway. Twin Falls competes with Jerome County; they are rivals for industry and water. Putting them together would be like putting coyotes together with wolves. A legislator would have a difficult time representing both constituencies. Better to combine Minidoka and Cassia Counties which are already very linked, and have Hispanic population that may one day get its own district. He concluded by urging the commission to consider starting from Ada and Canyon Counties, divide roughly with the number of districts, and then move east and north combining districts which are short of numbers with those adjacent ones which have seen small growth. Then once the commission gets to the outer edges of the state they could see how far off they are and then work back to the southeast making a few adjustments. He encouraged the commission to keep like areas together, and not to penalize counties which have had growth to save those which have not had growth. "Covet not thy neighbor's people." And lastly he asked the commission not to create a "city district" for Twin Falls as this would not be good for the area, and due to annexation any city boundary district would rapidly be obsolete. **Commissioner Frasure** then discussed that there is no highway connecting his current district, and asked **Representative Hartgen** if he saw a community of interest with Cassia County rather than with the Homedale and Marsing area. **Representative Hartgen** agreed that Homedale and Marsing are a long way from Twin Falls; however, the district has worked out well and there are many agricultural and land management similarities between the two areas. **Commissioner Frasure** also asked about the connection between Twin Falls City and the Owyhee County area to which **Representative Hartgen** discussed the St. Luke's health care centers initiative between Twin Falls and Homedale. **Commissioner Frasure** then asked where **Representative Hartgen** would find the additional 23,000 people needed to put with Jerome County to make a district. **Representative Hartgen** suggested that the commission should look west for those people in Gooding and part of Elmore County or in the small leg of Blaine County that comes down in that area. **Commissioner Frasure** noted that 43 people live in that small leg.

Chairman Andersen noted that time is running short and since that many people have signed up to testify, he requested that speakers keep to three minutes.

Bob Sojka, from District 23, was next to testify, and stated that the citizens of this district should get the same amount of time to speak as the politicians. He indicated that he thought this process should start from scratch instead of trying to work within the existing districts. He indicated that he firmly supports the concept of redistricting on the basis of forming districts around communities of interest, and stated that his community of interest is the City of Twin Falls and Twin Falls County. He further pointed out to the commission that his area does not have any interests in common with Owyhee County, and in fact their economic interests are in competition with that area. Our current district line bisects our city and our community of interest. **Commissioner Frasure** advised **Mr. Sojka** that Twin Falls County falls short of two districts and asked him where he would suggest that the commission find the additional 13,000 people. Mr. Sojka indicated that he feels they are compatible with Jerome, and suggested splitting the genuine rural areas of Twin Falls County away.

Marge Slotten was next called and passed in the interest of time. She indicated that she will submit written testimony.

Next to address the commission was **Tom Billington**, a Republican precinct chair from Twin Falls, who expressed that his concern is his children's future regarding water and water rights. Water is the blood of Idaho. He suggested that this is a common interest, and he encouraged the commission to keep his community together.

John Shine, the Mayor of Jerome, was next to testify, and advised the commission that it is clear that urban areas will be gaining at the expense of the rural areas, and he indicated that Jerome grew 40% in the last census. He suggested that there are significant differences across the river from the people of Jerome and it would be a great disservice to lump them in with the Twin Falls precincts. He indicated that the bridge is a dividing line and that the people would want as little change as possible in terms of redistricting. He agrees with Rep. Hartgen's "wiggle the line" concept. **Commissioner Frasure** then asked **Mayor Shine** if they could not be joined with Minidoka, what his second choice would be. **Mayor Shine** indicated that he was not prepared with the numbers but would suggest going west as they have the dairy industry in common with Minidoka and Gooding. The communities north of the Snake River are significantly different than the communities south of the river. He also indicated that Jerome has room to grow and they are currently trying to attract economic development.

Next to testify was **Scott McClure**, an engineer in Twin Falls who lives in Jerome, who suggested that the commission take a fresh look at Idaho and where the communities of interest are. He proposed that the City of Twin Falls have its own district as the people in rural Twin Falls and rural Jerome have their own deep ties. He suggested that CSI has welded the two counties together and that water is critical to both as their canal companies each take water out of the Snake River. He also indicated that the surrounding areas do their retail shopping mostly in Twin Falls, and that communications, newspapers, and television are all centered in Twin Falls. He also suggested that Minidoka and Cassia Counties consider themselves a community and it would be wise to recognize that commonality. **Commissioner Moses** then asked **Mr. McClure** that when he describes where he lives, in which order he would identify his location such as school district, city, etc. **Mr. McClure** stated that he would probably first say school district, then city or county, whichever it is, and probably lastly the legislative district.

Laura Ohlensohlen, a social worker in Twin Falls, who lives in rural Jerome County, was next to testify. She stated that she thinks that Jerome County has commonalities with Twin Falls. The two communities share social services and medical facilities, newspaper, and television. She suggested that the City of Twin Falls be one district with another district composed of Jerome County and the rural areas of Twin Falls County, which have agriculture and social values in common.

David Maestas, was next called to testify and stated that he would pass at this time.

Terrell Williams, a Gooding County Commissioner, then testified on behalf of the board, and requested that their county be kept whole. Dividing the county would be expensive by increasing elections. **Commissioner Frasure** inquired which of the counties adjoining Gooding they would most like to be married to, since their population is only one-third of a legislative district. She had no suggestions regarding where the county would like to be joined.

Next to address the commission was **Leroy Hayes**, who lives in Twin Falls City. He urged the commission to listen to the citizens of Twin Falls City who requested that they be their own district like Idaho Falls and Pocatello. He suggested that the only reason not to do this would be politically motivated. He feels they have nothing in common with Owyhee County, and urged the commissioners to listen to the citizens, not the politicians. **Commissioner Frasure** then asked **Mr. Hayes** about the past and potential growth in Twin Falls and discussed the problem with using changing city boundaries as district boundaries. **Mr. Hayes** indicated that as the center of Magic Valley he would hope that Twin Falls would grow and gave many reasons why this would happen. He also indicated that the major area of growth is in District 23, and that the city should stay compact and not grow across the canyon. **Commissioner Frasure** asked **Mr. Hayes'** opinion regarding using city boundary lines or geographical features that may be more permanent. **Mr. Hayes** suggested using the city area of impact.

Lucy Brazil-Wilkes, Vice-President of the Twin Falls Republican Women from District 23, was next to testify, and echoes Steve Hartgen and Tom Billington's desire to keep District 23 the way that it is. Her husband is off counting bluebird boxes in Owyhee County at this very moment. She suggested that the Twin Falls and Owyhee portions of the district have much in common such as hunting, fishing, and four wheeling, and she encourages the people who live in Twin Falls City proper to get out a little bit.

Next to testify was **Grant Loebs**, the Twin Falls County Prosecuting Attorney. He indicated that he thinks of Twin Falls County as its own community of interest because there is much cooperation between the people that administer and govern the county and the city, and each cannot function without the other. He stated that putting a doughnut hole around the city of Twin Falls doesn't make sense as the city boundaries change, and the city will snatch up the parts of the county that grow. He requested that the commission keep it simple and keep Districts 23 and 24 as they are. **Commissioner Frasure** then indicated the challenge that the commission has is district shifting, and asked **Mr. Loebs** where, other than Owyhee County, could the commission find the 13,000 people needed to join with Twin Falls County to make a district. **Mr. Loebs** indicated that he would have to look at the map because he doesn't want to hack up another county any more than he wants his county hacked up. That's why it what works well for joining with Owyhee County, because the numbers work. **Commissioner Moses** requested that Mr. Loebs submit a proposal to the commission and Mr. Loebs agreed.

The Commissioners briefly discussed whether to extend the duration of the hearing beyond 9 p.m.

Clair McClure, who lives in Jerome County and works in Twin Falls City, was next to testify and indicated that her community of interest is both Jerome and Twin Falls. She suggested however that if Jerome cannot be combined with Twin Falls County that combining Jerome County with the areas to the west like Gooding County would be better than combining it with Minidoka County.

Edna Carruthers was called next and indicated that what she intended to say had already been said and that she would be submitting written testimony.

Next called to testify was **Cindy Shotswell**, who lives in Jerome County. She indicated that she identifies with the Magic Valley and that Minidoka and Cassia Counties have a different dynamic than Twin Falls or even Jerome County. She stated that several businesses in Jerome are owned by Twin Falls interests, and pointed out that Twin Falls and Jerome share juvenile detention services, transportation, CSI, Health and Welfare, Hwy 93, and interpretation services, and that it makes sense to combine Jerome and Twin Falls to better serve the people.

Jeff Ruprecht, a resident of Twin Falls, next addressed the commission and urged them to divide Twin Falls and Owyhee County into separate legislative districts because that would be best for the College of Southern Idaho. Owyhee County is not within the taxing district of CSI. He further stated that he resents anyone who tries to perpetuate any animosity between Twin Falls and Jerome.

Dixie Siegel was called next and indicated that her thoughts had already been covered.

Next called to testify was **Patricia Marcantonio**, who lives in District 23, in the City of Twin Falls. She wanted to voice her support for making the City of Twin Falls its own district and detaching them from Owyhee County. She explained that Owyhee County is in the South Western Health and Welfare District and Health District, there is no direct road from Owyhee County to Twin Falls, and that the areas have little in common. Please don't play wiggle the line games and look at this with common sense.

Deborah Silver was next to testify and advised the commission that when people ask her where she's from she says Jerome even though she now lives in Twin Falls County. She stated that she would like to see an urban district in Twin Falls County and would like to see a separate district in the rural areas such as Buhl, Filer, etc. with Jerome County. She admitted to rivalry between Jerome and Twin Falls, especially in football, but feels they have commonalities nevertheless, such as sharing state government service regions. Ms. Silver also cited some research which she has done on the internet that shows the differences between Twin Falls and Owyhee County.

Chairman Andersen then advised the audience that if they did not get an opportunity to testify they could submit written testimony to the commission, or they could come to the hearing in Hailey the following evening. He then adjourned the meeting at 9:12pm.